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THE BIBLE AND THE CRITIC

BY

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THE BIBLE AND THE CRITIC

OUR present needs include, among other things, a clearer conception of what criticism has done for the Bible; of the particular respects in which it has failed; and of the direction or directions in which we may reasonably anticipate new developments. We need a far more ample and comprehensive perspective of it, a more generous and intelligent attitude towards it, and a more eminently courteous, critical, and did temper in approaching it. The virtue of perfecting our is a need deserving special mention since the lack of it is one of the most frequent and serious hindrances to moral and intellectual progress. Nothing is more inimical to truth, nothing more reprehensible than the obtrusion into theological and metaphysical discourses of the element of diplomacy; the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not, the mark of the minion but never of the man. Some attempt will be made to minister directly or indirectly to each of these needs, which will be constantly borne in mind in the course of a brief elucidation of the problem of the salient factors of our modern critical attitude towards the Bible and of their religious bearings, which is the immediate purpose of this article.

In stating our problem thus, it is assumed with Mr. John Morley, that we are all of us critics to day, that is, that we are actuated by that noblest and most imperishable element in Protestantism, in virtue of which we stoutly refuse to have our religious and metaphysical thinking done for us in water-tight compartments, and dispensed in the divers parts and parcels of ecclesiastical and denominational makeshifts and formularies inspired for the most part by conditions which no longer prevail. By our modern critical attitude towards the Bible is meant just what my readers will, so long as they are willing to grant the general principle of its upward move-

ment and development throughout. To define the extent of the operation of this principle within more precise limits, at present, is unnecessary and indeed undesirable, since each individual, from the ultra-conservative to the extreme rationalist, would protest equally that his attitude alone is eminently critical.

The problem will become clearer, perhaps, if prefaced with the following series of Biblical questions, and if note be taken of the vast divergence of standpoint implied in the spirit of the answers habitually given by us and our ancestors of a century ago respectively: a divergence well-nigh comparable to the difference between ancient and modern history. How long ago did the first man live? What was the nature of the first language spoken on earth? At what stage of development do we find the Hebrew language in the earliest records? What kind of affinity subsisted between the different languages of the East, after the origin of the myth of the confusion of tongues? What were the earliest relations of the Hebrews and the Phœnicians? What were their chief arts, crafts, and customs when we first read of them in the Bible? What was the nature of the original script in which the earliest portions of scripture were written? What were the degrees and the character of the civilization attained by the earliest Semitic nations referred to in the Bible? And what, last of all, was the nature and extent of their dependence upon each other?

Though we shall have occasion to answer some of these questions in more detail as we proceed, this is unnecessary at present. All that is required for our immediate purpose is to indicate the spirit in which they were habitually handled a century ago. "Read your Bible" was the kind of answer given, and very properly, no doubt, since there was almost nothing else to read. What the Bible does not teach about such things, it was contended, is not worth knowing, was never intended to be known, never can be known. What the Bible contains is the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, the sum-total of all truth—in short, all we need to know to appreciate the stages which mark the course of Revelation.

Though there was much truth in this, much more was left to be desired; a single century has been enough to almost completely reverse such opinions and prove the justice of my contention. A century ago the most learned were not in a position to answer any of these questions adequately. Being wholly ignorant even of the nature of the alphabet in which the earliest portions of scripture were written, being blissfully unconscious, for reasons which will become clearer as we proceed, of the various species of error involved in the transmission of the text, or at any rate of all its older portions, during a succession of centuries, they were quite incapable of forming a reliable judgement as to the purity and authenticity of the source from which they, necessarily, drew their premises. Moreover their conclusions, being almost invariably based upon a single premise, a single source of information, the Bible alone, were so many illustrations of the logical fallacy of the single instance: and their premises being in almost every case particular, or limited, the conclusions drawn from them could not possibly have had a universal or permanent character. But they were also limited in another direction: they failed to grasp the principle clearly, which is now self-evident to us, that a prerequisite for a true judgement on the value and significance of the work of any writer is an accurate and just conception of his predominant motive and purpose.

They failed to perceive that no Biblical writer ever arrogated to himself the function of solving such intellectual problems for his contemporaries, much less for us, as are involved in these questions. No doubt most of the *odium theologicum* of recent years can be traced to the persistence of popular religious and metaphysical fallacies, associated, rightly or wrongly, with the names of distinguished teachers of a century or more ago, the strength of whose principles and piety often ran in inverse ratio to their logical acumen and insight. Fortunately for us we have succeeded in weaning ourselves of many of their fallacies. The extension of our knowledge of the Bible, which has been increased a thousand-fold in recent years, both in quantity and quality, has carried us far

beyond the narrow intellectual horizon of their day. Their mechanical theory of inspiration, with its assumption of what "their" Bible *must* mean, has been relegated to a silent oblivion, and consequently the Bible, which is now *intelligently* regarded as one of the most sovereign pieces of the world's literature, has begun to assume for us a host of new and infinitely greater values.

In virtue of our wider knowledge, our truer perspective, and our more impartial and objective modes of thought, we can often solve Biblical problems to-day far more thoroughly and comprehensively than has ever been the case since the dawn of history. This may sound presumptuous, but it is better to be candid and face the facts than to assume an attitude of sanctimonious ignorance and morbidity, which is generally the cloak of conceit. Of course the *Laudator temporis acti* or the type of man who stopped reading thirty years ago, is still in our midst, and persists, from time to time, in chiming in, often in good faith. Is not this the presumption of science falsely so called? How have you come to hold this higher vantage ground of which you self-styled Higher critics boast? Can you furnish substantial grounds for your bold assertion that you are really wiser about some Bible questions than the Biblical authors themselves? How has your knowledge been increased a thousand-fold above even that of our immediate ancestors? The only real difficulty which confronts us in answering these questions is the lack of space incidental to every magazine article, which always renders it extremely difficult to treat a great subject comprehensively, thoroughly, and with dignity. Our modern critical attitude towards the Bible—and this is the real question at issue, including as it does all those previously raised—is mainly the product of three factors, ultimately reducible to one, that is, to a three-fold extension of our knowledge. This extension is due to three discoveries, which, regarded as organised branches of learning, constitute the three new sciences of I. Comparative Philology, II. Archæology, and III. His^t .

I. SEMITIC COMPARATIVE PHILOLOGY, OR THE DISCOVERY
ON THE BASIS OF LANGUAGE OF (i) THE PRINCIPAL
LINGUISTIC—AND IN SOME MEASURE ETHNOLOGICAL—
AFFINITIES SUBSISTING BETWEEN THE ISRAELITES AND
THE PEOPLES OF NORTH-WESTERN ASIA WITH WHOM
THEIR OWN HISTORY WAS ONCE ORGANICALLY RELATED,
AND (ii) THE RELATIVE ORDER AND SEQUENCE IN WHICH
ALL OF THOSE NATIONS KNOWN TO US TECHNICALLY AS
SEMITES MOUNTED THE STAGE OF HISTORY.

The principle of the uniformity of nature which is the creed of the scientist is an axiom of fundamental importance to the philologist, with whom it takes the shape of the assumption of a unity or affinity of varying degrees between each of the members of any great family of languages. Early in the 19th century Bopp, the real father of the science of comparative philology, discovered for the first time proofs of this principle in regard to the Aryan languages. But he was far from being the original discoverer of the principle on which he erected his science, for long before his day the great Orientalists of the 18th century had demonstrated the fact of a like unity underlying all those languages, known to us as Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic, Syriac, and Geez or Ethiopic: the first essays, in fact, in this direction were made as long ago as the 10th century, by the great Jewish grammarians, who, while working under the stimulus of the superb philologists of Arabia, discovered the ultimate unity of Hebrew and Arabic. It might be inferred perhaps from the myth of the confusion of tongues that the generations ante-dating that myth knew something of the ultimate unity of all Semitic speech; but whatever may have been the actual state of knowledge possessed by those people, it is quite certain that neither the Hebrews, nor the cognate Semitic nations have ever since had a clear knowledge of their mutual affinities whether racial or linguistic. The 18th century Orientalists had in fact made a completely new discovery of far reaching consequences, which called for the invention of a term to give it concise and accurate expression. Necessity has ever been

the mother of invention, and to her our term Semitic owes its origin. It was first used simultaneously by two Göttingen professors in the year 1780, and though not entirely free from objection, it derived a certain propriety from the fact that some of the nations included in it are traced to the eponymous hero Shem, in the 10th chapter of Genesis, hence the term Shemitic, which in its Latin form became Semitic. It has a much wider connotation to-day than ever before. It is now used to designate all those nations, ethnologically related, whose progenitors were reared in a common cradle, probably in the heart of Arabia, lisping their mother tongue, the *ex hypothesi* proto-Semitic speech, which is now no longer known to us except in its more or less direct and collateral descendants, the Hebrew, Phœnician, Punic, Moabitish, Babylonian, Assyrian, Aramaic, Syriac, Arabic, and Geez or Ethiopic languages and dialects. Thanks to Bopp to whom belongs the honour of having laid the first foundations of Comparative Philology, in some respects the Queen of Sciences, philology has been transformed from being the mere plaything of the irresponsible dilettante, into one of the most serious, fruitful and corrective of comparative sciences. Whenever we are fortunate enough to possess linguistic data of sufficiently wide distribution, the laws of comparative philology are found to be as universal and inflexible in their operation as the laws of any science. Their perfect mastery involves a more protracted, patient, and exacting mental training than the laws of any other science, and demands for their full appreciation and use the possession of the most exquisite mental balance and insight. It is true that the presence of *acunæ* often render philological deductions inconclusive, and at times impossible, but this is a limitation from which no science can be completely absolved, least of all a comparative science; and it is one which is likely to be more and more remedied as the science grows out of its teens—which is still very largely the condition of the comparative philology of the Semitic languages—and as its hand-maid archæology grows more scientific.

It is now generally recognized that comparative philology is of supreme importance to the Biblical student, and is quite indispensable for any advanced research of permanent value on Biblical problems. One of the first pre-requisites for a truly scientific reconstruction of Biblical history, not to speak of ancient Semitic history, is the acquisition of an accurate knowledge of the main linguistic and racial affinities of the tribes and nations of the Old Testament, and of their relative sequences and synchronisms. But this is just the kind of knowledge which we are unable to obtain from the Old Testament itself, except in a very inadequate and distorted shape, since the Biblical writers themselves sometimes reveal a tendency to conceal and obscure the facts. Here then is one of the main values of this factor. Without its aid it is quite impossible to form more than the vaguest notions as to the radical significance, and the course of the evolution of the majority of the most common and characteristic ideas and ideals of Hebrew and Semitic religion and civilization. From it we have discovered the highly significant fact that the Arabic language is substantially a thousand years older than the earliest form of Hebrew and Phœnician known to us; and that the Hebrews and Phœnicians were far more closely akin to one another than they were to any other Semitic tribe or nation, unless we except the Moabites; and that probably at one time they were substantially the same people, speaking the same language, with differences of inflection and vocabulary no greater than those which distinguish any two prominent Yorkshire dialects, spoken in adjacent villages, and consequently that they participated, at one time, in precisely the same class of psychological, ethical, and religious traits. And lastly we have discovered, among many other things, that the people of Israel was one of the youngest members of the group to which it belonged. "Between the origin of the different races of South-Western Asia and the appearance of the people of Israel had rolled unnumbered millenniums; hence there is no room for serious discussion over historical traditions said to be possessed by Israel regarding these primitive times."

II. THE NEW SCIENCE OF SEMITIC ARCHÆOLOGY OR THE DISCOVERY, CLASSIFICATION, AND INTERPRETATION OF THE LONG BURIED, OR PARTIALLY SUBMERGED, CIVILIZATIONS OF THE SEMITIC WORLD.

Since it is only quite within the last two decades that this subject has begun to assume the proportions of a science, it is inevitable that the significance and bearings of archæology, not to speak of Semitic archæology, which is our real concern, should be very imperfectly understood by the general reading public. Before proceeding to the consideration of the real scope and function of our special branch of this subject, out of which the science as a whole originated, a few preliminary and general observations will not be out of place.

A science generally owes its initiation to the trained insight and reflection of a master mind: but several of the more important archæological discoveries, especially of former years, have been stumbled upon in the dark, more by good fortune than good management, by men of somewhat slender training and scholarship, who have frequently proved themselves very imperfectly qualified to measure the value of their own discoveries. In the hands of such men, who have often been actuated by high religious motives, archæology has been hailed by their ultra-conservative admirers as the especial monopoly of the anti-critical school, and regarded by them as a species of anti-critical Eldorado, as constituting, in short, a pious and effectual means of dissipating the various unpalatable and imaginary obstructions and aberrations of their critical rivals, with the result that, till quite recently, archæology has fallen into considerable disrepute among scholars who have not investigated the subject for themselves. Fortunately for the Biblical student things have recently taken a very different turn, and the field of Biblical and Semitic archæological discovery is being already rapidly surveyed and extended by men of trained philological and historical sense, whose primary aim is neither to condemn nor to vindicate *a priori* any particular set of theological or critical presuppositions, but merely to observe and record the facts accurately,

and to draw from them impartially the inferences which may be legitimately deduced. This method, which is after all the only honourable and rational course to pursue, has proved, as was to be expected, that neither the extreme critic nor his extreme opponent possesses an exclusive monopoly of the truth. Thanks to the labours of such men, archaeology is being rapidly and securely established upon a purely scientific basis. "When it deals with the material remains of ancient life, it has much in common with the physical sciences, and pursues similar methods, whether in the acquisition of new data by excavation and exploration, or in classification and comparison of what is already in the laboratory or the museum."

By Semitic archaeology we mean the discovery and interpretation by the aid of scientific methods of the long-buried, or partially submerged, civilizations of the Semitic world. That part of the subject of most direct value to the Biblical student consists of two classes of data: on the one hand, the myriad of monuments and specimens of workmanship, in clay, stone, marble, silver, gold, copper, and ivory, etc., of epigraphical or inscriptional value, executed by the more highly gifted and formative nations of Baylonia, Assyria, and, though in less measure, of Egypt, whose history has often been more Semitic than African; and on the other hand the numerous remains of the less highly civilized and progressive tribes and nations of all parts of the Semitic world, whose monuments often possess an even higher inscriptional value for the Biblical student, though they are generally less pretentious and imposing to the outward eye. These have been discovered in almost every Semitic nook and cranny hitherto explored. Semitic inscriptional monuments have proved more valuable for several reasons, in the reconstruction of Biblical and Semitic history and civilization, than the similar monuments of the Greek and Roman fields have proved for classical history. Without the illumination they shed upon many obscure times, and regions, the historian's task would be an impossibility. In virtue of the comparative absence among the Semites of continuous historical records of a literary kind, and their

predilection for a monumental medium for recording and perpetuating public and domestic events, and the peculiar genius of Semitic speech, with its writing—which is quite *sui generis*, often enabling the writer to say eloquently in a couple of words consisting of six or seven letters what we can often express, very imperfectly, in six or seven words—Semitic monuments possess an altogether pre-eminent value both for the philologist and the historian.

For instance, we are indebted to the monuments of those larger nations for the earliest form of comparative lexicons, and the earliest attempt at systematic chronology and synchronisms; while to take a single illustration from the other direction, and that a most important one, we are wholly indebted to some of the monuments of those smaller nations for our knowledge of the earliest forms of alphabetic writing at present known. In spite of the recent labours of Cypriot scholars we are still in the dark as to the actual genesis of this script. Whatever it may have been, or whatever may be the ultimate issue on this point, there can be no doubt that its original discovery will ever be accounted one of the most splendid and epoch-making triumphs of ancient civilization. "To invent and bring to perfection the score or so of handy symbols for the expression of spoken words which we call our alphabet has proved to be the most arduous enterprise on which the human intellect has ever been engaged. Its achievement tasked the genius of the three most gifted races of the ancient world." The discovery from these monuments of the so-called Phœnician script, which is already known to us in the Semitic zone, alone, in over eighty more or less modified forms, and which is, in fact, the prototype from which all the alphabets of the world have been gradually evolved, is of interest to all who can read and write, and is of considerable importance to the student of Biblical records. There can no longer be any reasonable doubt that all of the older portions of the Bible were originally written in this script, or at any rate in one which was almost its exact fac-simile, and absolutely the same in principle.

The following points, which it is hoped will prove interesting, will suffice to illustrate its peculiarities as it appears in its earliest form; and as they have a direct bearing on the purity of the source from which most Biblical premises are drawn they have more than ephemeral value. (i) In the first place, with the exception of the three longest vowels, the signs for which were both originally and normally used as consonants, the consonants alone were written in this script. (ii) In the second place, since most of the inflections really depended upon the vowels, both long and short, of which the latter were far more frequent and variable in the spoken language, nearly all the inflections of grammar, not to speak of the subtler cadences of the music of speech on which all the nicer nuances and modulations of logic and rhetoric depended, had to be mentally supplied by the reader. (iii) In the third place, since each line of writing consisted of an unbroken sequence of consonants, utterly devoid, in the oldest scripts, of all divisions separating the different words, and of all marks of grammatical and logical interpunctuation and accent, every reader was compelled according to his inherent insight and powers of discrimination to mentally separate out and group up for himself the various lines of consonants into their constituent word and sentence groups. Sometimes he naturally found at his disposal a series of alternative groupings yielding ideas of various degrees of opposition or contradiction, according as he included or excluded the line or lines preceding or succeeding the one he was engaged on; though difficulties of this sort were not as frequent as the Western student might suppose. If the stone or medium of writing employed was at all weather-beaten or damaged, the task was one which often baffled the most acute reader. (iv) And, lastly, since this alphabet was apparently designed for monumental purposes, *i.e.*, for chiseling on stone or some hard surface, the consonants, being largely restricted by the exigencies of the case, tended to assume from the first highly similar shapes angular or lineal. Thus several of the consonants which later became quite distinct

remained nearly identical for centuries, being differentiated in some cases by only slight angles and curves, which tended to assume different aspects, at different times, according to the quality of the material employed in each particular inscription and the state of its preservation; others, too, distinct at first, became identical in the later history of the script.

Any one who has grasped these points will see how inevitable it was that a considerable amount of error should have crept into the older portions of the Old Testament, which must have been written and transmitted at the first in a script very similar to the type described, since for many centuries there was apparently no other alternative. In all probability a large number of corruptions, false-groupings of consonants, and consequently highly false renderings and interpretations—probably many more thousands than most people have any idea of—crept into the older portions of the Bible from the earliest times, and the continuous transmission and transcription for centuries of such a corrupted text, by the hand of scribes of various degrees of education, alertness, and fidelity, would almost certainly result in a continuous growth of error, irrespective of scribal presuppositions and predilections. But this is not all, since the errors were probably further augmented through the peculiar difficulties involved in the process of transition from the monumental or Phœnician type of script into its cursive or Aramaic descendant, which replaced the older Biblical script some time before the Christian era; and out of which was gradually evolved the progenitor of the script of our present Hebrew Bibles, which first made its appearance shortly before the time of William the Conqueror.

The LXX itself bears ample testimony to many of these points. Archæological discoveries have enabled us to restore with high degrees of probability a number of Old Testament textual corruptions, and there is probably a great deal more to be done in this direction than has yet been attempted.

“The last two generations,” writes Professor Driver, “have seen exhumed and reconstructed two entire civilizations (those of Babylonia and of Egypt), each beginning

in an almost incalculable antiquity, each presenting a highly organised society, possessing well developed institutions, literature, and art, and each capable of being followed with much circumstantiality of detail through a long and eventful history." "The general result of the archaeological and anthropological researches of the last half-century," continues the same writer, "has been to take the Hebrews out of the isolated position which as a nation they seemed previously to hold, and to demonstrate their affinities, and often dependence upon the civilizations by which they were surrounded."

III. THE NEW SCIENCE OF HISTORY, OR THE RE-DISCOVERY OF THE HISTORICAL METHOD, AND ITS APPLICATION TO HEBREW AND SEMITIC LITERARY AND INSCRIPTIONAL REMAINS, BOTH SECULAR AND SACRED.

Our modern critical attitude towards the Bible is due, in the last resort, neither to philology nor archaeology as such, but to the introduction of the third, or middle term of the historical method. The function of this method is the correlation and interpretation of the data supplied by each of the former sciences combined with the sum-total of all related knowledge. Historiography, whose primary motive lies deep down in that passion for immortal fame common to all races, is a process which has been undergoing gradual evolution from the time of the earliest lifings of humanity. It comprises three stages or methods closely related and yet distinct. The first is that which culminated in the epical, heroic or descriptive method, *par excellence*; the next is the didactic, gnostic, parenetic, or pragmatic method which began to replace it when an age of reason and self-consciousness succeeded one of charming *abandon* and *gaieté*; and the third is the genetic or historical method proper, of our own day. Though essentially characteristic of our age, the honour of having first discovered and applied it belongs to Ibn Khaldûn, the great Moslem philosopher and historian of the 13th century, and one of the most original of thinkers. De Boer shows that Ibn Khaldûn, who wrote the first great work, "The

Philosophy of History " or " History as a Science," was the first to endeavour to derive the development of human society from proximate causes. The conditions of race, climate, production of commodities, and so on, are discussed, and are set forth in their effect upon the sensuous and intellectual constitution of man and society. In the course which is run by civilization he finds an intimate conformity to law. He searches everywhere for natural causes with the utmost completeness which was possible to him. His conception of the nature and function of history is thus summarised by De Boer: "So far as historical events are capable of being traced back to their causes, and historical laws capable of being discovered, history deserves to be called a science and a part of philosophy. Thus the idea of history as science clearly emerges. It has nothing to do with curiosity, frivolousness, general benefit, edifying effect. It should, though in the service of the higher purposes of life, determine nothing except facts, endeavouring to find out their causal nexus. The work must be done in a critical and unprejudicial spirit." Conscious of the fact that he was indicating the outlines of a new science, he expresses the hope that " Others will come after him to carry on his investigations (*i.e.* in regard to the history of his own race), and propound fresh problems with sound understanding and sure knowledge."

But the Christian church, unconscious of his work, slept on under the cloak of superstition and priest-craft for over five hundred years before its nobler minds awoke to realise for the first time this consummation for which our saint of Islâm had so devoutly wished; and their awakening has completely transformed our conception of the nature of both Bible history and the history of the Bible. In regard to the former we know now that the Old Testament writers were almost exclusively interested in " general benefit " and " spiritual edification," and consequently gave their undivided attention to the first two of those stages or methods which could scarcely be expected to yield history in any exact sense of the term. Being wholly

ignorant of the genetic method their writings, though replete with *historical data*, do not constitute history at all, strictly speaking. Since historical data, though one of the most important elements of history, by no means constitute the thing itself, it is highly inexact and misleading to predicate the term history at all of the Old Testament books, and can serve no good purpose. Learned Jews from time to time have given a hint of this. One Rabbi admitted unequivocally, in the early days of Christianity, that "In the Law," that is, the Pentateuch, "there is neither before or after," no sequence and subsequence, no real chronological order. This admission, which sounds so modern to our ears, affords a welcome confirmation from a stongly conservative direction of our modern critical conviction. The result is that to extract the quintessence of the history of the Old Testament and, what is more important, of Old Testament history, to penetrate to its actual background, to place ourselves in the position of sympathetic onlookers intelligently following the course of the evolution of the external and internal destinies of the people of Israel, in the light of their various antecedents and consequents, demands the submission of every single chapter and verse to a most impartial and searching analysis and investigation, followed up by the reconstruction of the whole, so far as such a process is now practicable, through the aid of the historical method, and the numerous synchronisms, and analogies of Semitic and universal history. The whole process is one that calls for the undivided attention of the greatest intellects of our time.

In dealing with the factors of our modern critical attitude towards the Bible, I have hitherto deliberately refrained from alluding in technical language to the nature and relation of the three integral stages or factors of Biblical Criticism to our three main factors; though in dealing with the latter frequent reference has been made to the subject matter of the former. Since the first two of these stages, known respectively as the Lower or Textual and the Higher or Literary Criticism, have nothing about them essentially new in principle, being as

old as the Bible itself, they require no further consideration here. But the case is very different with the third or culminating stage of Biblical criticism technically known as historical or historico-philosophical criticism, to which the former stages are merely ancillary; for being essentially a product of our own age, it calls for some consideration in connection with our third great factor, the historical method. These two, the historical criticism and the historical method, are obviously merely different aspects of the same thing. In stating the function of the historical method, we have said as much of historical criticism in that this latter aims also at the correlation and interpretation of the first two main factors of our extended knowledge, and the assured results of the Lower and Higher Criticism, combined with the facts and principles of all related phenomena and systems of thought and conduct, Oriental and Occidental. It is precisely here at the third stage of the science of Biblical criticism that the problems of evolution properly emerge; for it is here that it is first practicable to trace out the genesis and evolution of Hebrew and Semitic ideas and ideals as we find them enshrined in institutions, customs, and civil, criminal, and ritual codes. It is here that the purely speculative faculty finds its most complete and legitimate sphere of operation; and it is here, if anywhere, that the blame should fall for those extravagances and aberrations of the speculative mind which is often so unjustly and indiscriminately heaped upon the heads of the innocent Higher critics who enjoy, as such, but a very restricted scope for pure speculation. Though the historical criticism of the Bible has already yielded invaluable results, it is still in its infancy: most of the work hitherto undertaken amounting to little more, to borrow a figure from mining, than the work of a few brilliant prospectors in an expansive and largely unexplored region. Hitherto the principle of evolution has been consistently applied only in a few leading directions. But a science becomes justified of its title in exact proportion to its capacity to correlate and explain, in the terms of cause and effect, the whole of the phenomena lying

within its especial province. Unfortunately it has to be candidly admitted that historical criticism has hitherto proved a signal failure in one, at least, of the most important directions. It has completely failed to explain in evolutionary terms the genesis and nature of the specific antecedents of the sublime faith of the prophets of Israel. We still await the hypothesis which shall indicate and explain the specific antecedents of Yahwehism, and their causal nexus. To grant that evolution will prove powerless in the long run to provide an *intellectual solution* of this problem of problems would argue a degree of rashness and pessimism to which no thinker could possibly subscribe, for it would imply a complete distrust of human reason, the noblest element in personality; and would impede intellectual progress, if not indeed arrest it altogether in at least one important direction.

Evolution there must have been, in some shape or other, and the solution of the problem along such lines should only be a matter of time. Men like Robertson Smith and Julius Wellhausen, two of the most gifted Biblical critics who ever lived, have accomplished little more than the work of brilliant pioneers, and consequently it was not given to them to do more than merely touch the fringe of the problem, though in doing so they have led us some way. Following their masterly lead, in a somewhat too slavish manner, the critics find themselves confronted to-day with a huge mountain, which it is impossible to scale, lying right across their path. As soon as they decide to abandon their most direct frontal attack and endeavour to circumambulate it by some other path or paths more devious for the time being, the solution of this problem will probably loom in sight: that is to say, we need to-day a completely new set of hypotheses to replace those of a former generation, which have been weighed and found wanting. In a lecture delivered last June on his experiments with helium, and the problem of the approach to absolute zero in temperature, Sir James Dewar said: "It was a source of pride that in the last thirty years chemists engaged in investigations like these had done more

than had been accomplished in the previous three thousand years." Though learned men and scholars readily endorse such statements as these, men are apt to demur at once to similar statements made in regard to the progress of Biblical Science, where the difference is merely one of subject matter, the instruments being in the last issue precisely the same, the observation and discrimination of points of similarity and difference, and their interpretation by means of hypotheses.

The historical criticism, too, is little more than thirty years old, and since hitherto only a small percentage of the finest intellect of the world has been consecrated to its function, it is surely a great deal too soon to begin to speak of failures as final. Professor Driver writes in reference to the Hebrew race, "The spiritual intuitions and experiences of its great teachers retain still their uniqueness; but the secular institutions of the nation, and even the material elements upon which the religious system of the Israelites was itself constructed, are seen now to have been in many cases common to them with their neighbours. Thus their beliefs about the origin and early history of the world, their social usages, their code of civil and criminal law, their religious institutions can no longer be regarded as was once possible, as differing in kind from those of other nations, and determined in every feature by a direct revelation from heaven; all, it is now known, have substantial analogies among other people, the distinctive character which they exhibit among the Hebrews consisting in the spirit with which they are infused, and the higher principles of which they are made the exponent." The "religious institutions" of Israel having "substantial analogies" among cognate Semitic nations are probably in very large measure the reflex of inherited tendencies common to the Canaanitish group of which Israel was a member; and as such they are the product of evolution, differentiation, and modification due to special conditions. Neither Professor Driver nor any other distinguished Hebraist has attempted to indicate with any measure of success the specific antecedents of Yahwehism and their causal nexus, and herein lies one of the great limitations of their work.

Though it may sound presumptuous as coming from one of Doctor Driver's younger pupils, I do not hesitate to say that I have hopes that my own hypothesis of Phœnician religion will carry us at least one step further towards the solution of this tremendous problem. At a public lecture delivered last year, through the lack of a more suitable expression, and in spite of its sounding like a real contradiction in terms, I designated my hypothesis as Androgynistic Monotheism; but it behoves me to refrain from enunciating it, at present, in greater detail, and of indicating its exact bearings on the problem until I have ampler opportunity of consulting the works and monuments in the great libraries and museums of Europe, and of scrutinizing the phenomena more closely which have already come under my observation. Though I would state here that should my hypothesis prove valid, the results of Winckler and Cheyne, according to whom David was the creator of the Judean state through whose instrumentality "the worship of Yahwe became the officially recognised national cult of Israel, as well as of Judah," will require considerable modification, for in such a case even David would be too remote. In leaving these three great factors, which have so affected our view of the Bible, it is interesting to note from the standpoint of the history of learning that each of the three sciences to which they gave birth was intimately and inseparably associated, in its initial stages, with either Semitic data or Semitic learning or with both of them simultaneously.

A few words in conclusion on the religious bearings of the subject. The results of Biblical criticism are often stigmatised as negative and destructive; such of course they are as all truly educational and intellectual progress must needs be, if it is to possess any constructive and permanent value; consequently neither on these grounds nor on any general Biblical grounds can valid objection be brought against it. Jeremiah himself was commanded to pursue a negative and destructive process when he received his divine commission "To pluck up, and to break down, and to destroy, and to overthrow

in order to build up, and to plant " more securely, and fruitfully, and consequently more permanently than was ever the case before his day; and experience proves conclusively that his prophetic mantle has never ceased to fall, all too heavily at times, upon the shoulders of every genuine reformer. To appreciate Jeremiah's utterances it is necessary to put ourselves in his place, and to grasp his stand-point clearly. This in fact is a *sine qua non* in dealing with every writer. The justice and value of a judgement on any written work, Biblical or non-Biblical, depend upon the correctness with which the critic conceives of the predominant motive and assumed stand-point of the writer. Though it is manifestly unfair and inexcusable to condemn a writer for failing to produce results beside his purpose, the fallacy is of common occurrence among religious writers. If before pronouncing judgement on a Biblical thesis the reader would ask himself what are the ultimate stand-points conceivably adopted by the author in question, he would find that they are reducible to one of two options. There are ultimately two stand-points, motives, or methods by the use of which it is possible to measure such events as the great movements of Israel's history, which have exercised and still continue to exercise a most beneficent and world-wide influence. These are (i) the method of theology and (ii) the method of evolution, which I would briefly characterise as follows:—

(i) THE METHOD OF THEOLOGY. The exponent of this method postulates as a primary or first cause of all things a personal and spiritual force or power termed "God," regarded as independent of, and reposing behind, Nature, and yet at the same time the originator and sustainer of its operations. The more unusual workings of this power are termed "mysterious," a term which the scientist, as such, very properly ignores, or at any rate translates into "another term for our own ignorance." Since Hebrew mental development was prematurely arrested by a sequence of adverse political conditions just at the point when it was beginning to emerge from a condition which would normally have led to the habitual

conception of secondary causes, it so happens that this was the psychological mode in which the minds of Israel's great prophets operated, almost exclusively. Even to-day every Jew, Christian, Moslem, or Theosophist falls back inevitably on this mode of reasoning as soon as he becomes, for the time being, exclusively preoccupied with the contemplation of the whole circle of nature rather than with the details of its manifold processes. The specific difference between such various exponents of this method resolve themselves very largely into the difference of label by which each of them designates that "power" which for all of them has a very strong personal equation. This method, which is the only one possible from the stand-point assumed, is perfectly valid, as far as it goes, though it is only a semi-process. It is not unscientific as some would short-sightedly term it, but rather neutral or non-scientific, being in reality the correlative and complement of the method we have next to consider.

(ii) THE METHOD OF EVOLUTION. A different motive and purpose lead us to the adoption of the alternative stand-point of the method of evolution, which is the one necessarily assumed throughout this article. As the former is not unscientific but non-scientific, so this is by no means necessarily, nor even normally, irreligious but rather neutral or non-religious. As soon as we turn from the contemplation of nature as a whole, viewed as the product of a mysterious personal agent, logic compels us to substitute secondary causes or natural laws in the place of a prime cause: that is to say, we invoke the aid of the general principle of evolution as the only possible means of arriving at a satisfactory interpretation of nature's manifold operations. Thus the exponent of the one method is completely absorbed, for the time being, in the observation and interpretation of the results which follow on the assumption of the unity and continuity, or the uniformity of nature: while that of the other is equally absorbed for the time being with the results which follow on the assumption of a creative and sustaining agent reposing behind nature.

Strictly speaking, neither of these methods can be substi-

tuted for the other. They are of value in so far as their respective exponents, or the same exponent, at different times, adopt, or adopts, as the case may be, an attitude of complete neutrality in regard to the alternative method by restricting himself exclusively during that time to his chosen field of investigation. Thus between religion and science there is no inherent antithesis, and it is only when teachers of science and religion ignore these distinctions that a sense of antithesis, rivalry, and incompatibility insinuates itself. It cannot be too clearly stated in Canada, at present, even at the risk of repetition, that these two methods are not in themselves mutually exclusive and destructive, but complementary or correlative and consequently indispensable within their respective spheres. Each constitutes a semi-process from the metaphysical stand-point; each has a real psychological basis; each rests in the last analysis upon its own basal assumption or hypothesis which is a sovereign law unto itself. They rest upon the two earliest and grandest hypotheses ever conceived by man, "the existence of God," and "the uniformity of nature." Since each of them is of immemorial antiquity and of universal distribution, we assume that they are ineradicable in some shape or other from the human mind, and rest upon a basis of reality. So essential to progress do they seem to have been in the past that it is no longer possible for us to determine, within precise limits, which of the two has ministered most effectually to the growth of civilization and culture.

The historical critic is essentially an exponent of the method of evolution. He is able to achieve success and propound judgements valid and acceptable to thinkers in proportion to his professional ability to eliminate from his mind while at work in his own proper laboratory any particular set of theological and ecclesiastical presuppositions. Though *qua* historical critic of Hebrew customs and institutions his subject matter happens to be of a highly religious complexion, it by no means follows that his method is properly or necessarily the method of theology, for in adopting this method, he has already *ipso facto* prejudged a large part of his subject

matter before investigating it in any exact sense of that term. Without any desire to disparage theology, I do not hesitate to state that the almost exclusive preference for the method of theology on the part of Old Testament scholars, which is largely due to incapacity to grasp these distinctions clearly, has arrested intellectual progress along Biblical lines more than it is possible to say. The popular view that because the Bible is used as a religious text-book it can only be adequately interpreted by the method of theology is an unwarranted, illogical, and pernicious assumption, and has done more to injure the Bible and obscure its sublimities than anything else. Since the fundamental doctrinal points of the unity and tri-unity of the God of the Jewish and Christian systems respectively, are and always have been almost exclusively a fixed quantity, the diminution or increase of which would rapidly lead to the dissolution of their respective churches, or at any rate to their assumption of a very different character, it is obvious, viewing the question in the abstract, that the method of theology has failed, and is bound to fail in virtue of its nature, to lead to one iota of progress in regard to the Bible, along purely intellectual lines.

Consequently a certain measure of the virtue of critical abandon or that objective indifference to the specific complexion and bearings of prospective results sought for by the Old Testament interpreter is a prerequisite for any real extension of our knowledge. In other words future progress lies exclusively in the hands of the exponent of the method of evolution, if anywhere, so far as this subject is concerned; and in prosecuting this method consistently and enthusiastically the historical critic is really subserving the highest interests of religion. Unless he is of abnormal mental constitution he is sure to have a sense for religious speculation somewhere at the back of his mind, for this has been the experience of all the greatest thinkers. But whenever he gives *ex cathedrâ* pronouncements, *qua* historical critic, by the aid of the method of theology, he is clearly abandoning his own proper function for that of another which, though it be of enormous practical concern to the individual and the

State, is not likely, viewing the matter in the abstract, to advance him one whit further *intellectually* than the stage of religious thought already attained at the time of the dissolution of totemistic society. He who elects to honour the one method at the expense of the other does so at high cost to himself and to truth, for in spurning either of these methods as used in their respective spheres, he is deliberately closing his eyes to a mass of phenomena which always refuses in the long run to be heedlessly brushed aside. To honour the method of theology and dishonour that of evolution, or *vice versa*, is thoroughly illogical, and invariably brings its own Nemesis. The historical critic then is the man who clearly recognises these distinctions and their respective merits, and acts accordingly.

Our modern critical attitude towards the Bible, or in other words, the progress of Biblical criticism during the last century, is a matter of the highest importance to all of us in Canada who are actuated by the spirit of truth, progress, and liberty. Unless the members of the rising generation, many of whom no doubt are destined within a few years to become the intellectual and spiritual leaders and counsellors of this Dominion, are disposed to be fearlessly and patiently moulded in the fiery furnace of truth, during their formative years, with a view to learning how to adjust their minds to this ocean of new light, now pouring in from all directions, they will inevitably find to their sorrow, in mid-life, that they have lost their grip upon the reality of things, that they are playing idly with a mere shadow and travesty of the truth, that they have forfeited the confidence and esteem of those men and women whom they are most solicitous of helping in the great battle of life, and that they will be compelled in consequence to submit to the humiliation of being themselves led by those whom their commission bade them lead. Al-Hariri the Shakespeare of the Arabic mind said once in the inimitable manner of his native tongue: "Truly, the purity of the gem is shown by the testing, and the hand of truth rends the cloud of doubt."

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